

PRAISE and ADORATION.

OR, A E. II. I⁶

SERMON

ON

TRINITY-SUNDAY

BEFORE THE

University at *Oxford*. 1681.



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PSALM 103. V. 1.

*Bless the Lord, O my Soul ! and all that is
within me bless his holy Name !*

Here is an *Habitual*, and also an *Aeternal praising or Glorifying of God*: the first consists in a regular conformity of our Lives, or the general course of our Actions to the holy Will and Commands of God: But *Actual Adoration*, which is to be the Subject of my Ensuing Discourse, is it self a peculiar and solemn part of Divine Worship : which does not only consist in an open recitation of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, but also in a silent Exultation of our Faculties, and a Religious warmth of Soul wrought by Heavenly Objects.

Now there are many Words and Phrases in holy Scripture, especially in this Book of Psalms, which are often us'd to express the same Duty of Blessing or praising the Lord; And though they are promiscuously inserted(as certainly they ought to be, either in Popular or Poetick Writings) yet

are they, many of them, of peculiar limitation and signification; which being somewhat stated and explain'd, may serve to establish a full and easie notion of what in my following Discourse I shall make more copious and less nice reflexions.

Wherefore our most humble and worthy Apprehensions, our sincere devout resentments of the Divine Perfections, are necessarily requir'd to constitute the *Invisible Adoration* of the Heart, and Soul, and Spirit; which from its Vital and inward heat, is continually displaying it self into great variety of External Evidences, according to the diversity of those objects about which it is immediately conversant. So that we may be said to *praise* the Lord, when we declare his free and most excellent works of Mercy and Justice, of Creation and Providence; to *Magnifie* and *Adore* him, when we set forth his incomunicable and Natural Excellencies, such as his Omnipotence, Immensity, &c. which joynly consider'd, with his Universal Dominion and Sovereignty over all Creatures, may seem to signifie all that we mean by the *Glorious Majesty* of God. We may be said to *Bless* the Lord by our wishes and words; and being the good we wish is Extrinsick to his Nature, and not yet obtained, as, that the whole World may be converted and fear his Name, &c. we must be sure to bless him with our endeav-

endeavours too : But chiefly this *Blessing* is effected by our most *solemn Gratulations* ; for seeing we cannot confer any real good on God, we must continually express our joy and gladness for his actual possession of all possible perfection. To *worship* him, usually denotes a most humble posture of Body, when we incline towards, or prostrate ourselves on that Dust out of which we were made. We *Glorifie* God with our Mouths ; and accordingly the *Psalmist* calls his Tongue his *Glory*, Awake thou my Glory. *Thanksgiving* is an open profession and a hearty acknowledgment that we have received a Benefit most freely, and without any merit of our own. *Adoration* and *Thanksgiving* seem to differ in these respects : we *adore* God for things that were acted long ago, which concern not us any more, than that they were the Effects of his Omnipotence, as for all the Wonders done in the behalf of the Children of *Israel*: *Thanksgiving* relates to those Benefits which either we immediately receive, or whose effects are communicated to us. Also we *adore* God for his Judgments and his Vengeance, however displayed, either on our Enemies, or on our selves ; for which we are not properly said to return *Thanksgivings*; because *Adoration* respects the *Justice* of the Action, *Thanksgivings* the *goodness* of it. These Words and Phrases being thus

thus somewhat explain'd, I shall make no scruple to use them again in their popular sense and freedom, according as I shall find occasion for them, in my farther amplifications on the Text, which I will endeavour to handle in these *three respects.*

I. You may be pleas'd to consider the *Necessity* and *Excellence of Praise and Adoration. Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.*

II. I shall endeavour to shew what are those *Faculties and Capacities of the Soul, whereby this Adoration is perform'd. All that is within me.*

III. I will point out some of those *Benefits* which will arise from a Worthy performance of the Duty. *Bleſs the Lord, &c.*

I. You may be pleas'd to consider the *Necessity* and *Excellence of Praise and Adoration. Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.*

Prayers and Praiſes, which bear the name of all that we can properly call Divine Worſhip, are as well the Eternal Dictates of Nature, as the most Sacred Commands of Reuelation; and if there may be allowed any remarkable precedency in these higher

er Duties of Natural and Reveal'd Religion, *Praise* or *Adoration* seems justly to challenge that Prerogative: for should not we first acknowledge our Being, before we view and lament its imperfections? Should not we return our sacrifices of Gratitude for what we have already received, before we implore the Divine Benignity for further accessions, fresh supplies, and new assistances? Common Justice obliges us at all times, first to look back and magnifie the Lord for our actual preservation, before we presume to put up our Petitions for pardon and future security; and it requires a Psalm of Thanksgiving, that we are in a capacity to know our Wants, to survey our Infirmities. The meannels of our nature has indeed placed us below the possibility of making any Recompence, and yet the indigency of our condition still calls upon us to make fresh acknowledgments: and however imperfect these oblations are, yet are they the only shew of real service we can render, the only Image of Requital which our Creator has indulged us.

And as this Adoration is our indispensable Duty, so 'tis our Advantage and our glory too: 'tis not only the busines of our Creation, but the Excellency of it; and we never appear in a more exalted State, than when we Glorifie. In the performance

mance of this Duty, we more eminently make good our Communion with Saints and Angels, whilst with those blessed Spirits we constitute the same Choire, and make one Universal Hallelujah.

Nothing surely can be more *Just* and *Natural*, than to employ our breath to the glory of him who gave it us : nothing more *profitable*, than to magnifie the Lord into greater Mercies to our selves : Nothing more *delightful*, than to be always full of glorious Conceptions, always pouring forth the Language of Blessing and Affection ! *Prayers* are but the Mournful Draught and Table of our Misery, the representation of our Ship-wreckt Nature : *Repentance* has a gloomy side ; but *Praise* is Faiths and Reasons Triumph, a bright, unmixt, immaculate Joy, and only wants some few degrees of being all we can conceive of Heaven. Therefore

II. You may be pleas'd to consider what are those Faculties and Capacities of the Soul whereby this Duty is perform'd.

Now the powers of the Soul which are more eminently concern'd in the *Acts* of Adoration, seem to be *these Three*.

1. Our Reason. 2. Our Imagination. 3. Our Affections. For we may be said to Praise the Lord with

with our *Reason*, in these two respects. 1. When it perfectly and freely submits to the *High Mysteries of Faith*, or the *Doctrines of pure Revelation*. 2. When it humbly and devoutly busies it self about the *Nature* and *Attributes* of *God*, manifested in the *Works* of *Creation* and *Providence*; and though they are objects of *Revelation* too, yet have they a sure foundation in *Right Reason* and *Natural Religion*, and therefore may safely admit of a *modest* and *affectionate* enquiry. We may be said to praise the Lord with our *Imagination*, when we study to adorn our *Divine Conceptions* with the most *Excellent Idea's*, with the most *lively Representations* we can invent.

Lastly, We may be said to Praise the Lord with our *Affections*, when the whole Duty is perform'd with strong vehemency of Soul, and intenseness of Spirit, with the Unions of *Love* and *Wonder*, and such like bright *Affections* as perfect and exalt our most Spiritual performances. Of these in their Order.

1. We may be said to Praise the Lord with our *Reason*, when it perfectly and freely submits it self to the *High Mysteries of Faith*, or the *Doctrines of pure Revelation*.

And is it not an especial Excellency of the Christian Religion, that as all its Precepts for *Life* and

Manners are so perspicuously deliver'd, and so perfectly agreeable to the best conceptions of Mankind, that the *humble Person* cannot mistake his way to Heaven ; so also there are such Hights and Depths in the recesses of our *Faith*, as perhaps the Seraphims cannot comprehend ? And although these Propositions of our *Belief* also be as *clear* and *Evident* as History and Language can make them ; as infallibly *true* and *certain* as that God who has reveal'd them ; yet even in our modest contemplations on them, the excessive glory of the Revelation is apt to strike back, and scatter our Natural light into the Confusions of Broken Knowledge and Admiration ; into Humility, Love, Praise and Resignation ; thus perfecting our Natures, whilst it confounds our Enquiries ! So that the most *Speculative Mysteries* of Christianity, how Incomprehensible soever in their *Intrinsic Natures*, are yet as serviceable and conducive to the Ends of Religion, (*viz.*) the *glory of God*, and the promoting *true Holiness*, as the most practical and familiar *Doctrines* and encouragements of the *Gospel*.

Were indeed our *Mysteries* like those of the ancient Heathen, whose *Adyta* and *Penetralia* were but so many Cloysters of Separated Impurity, so many Concealments of Spiritual Craft, or of *Mystical* and *Appropriated Lust*; then the nice examining

ning World might very well complain of the Impostures of Priests, of the absurdities of a Superstitious Faith : but when the *Mysteries* we pretend to, are not such as are made so by Shrines, Temple-characters, and a Traditionary Caution ; but such as are expos'd to the promiscuous, yet humble view of all men, in *Confessions*, *Creeds*, and *Catechisms* ; and being thus expos'd, they are no *Incongruities* to our Moral conceptions, as most of the Heathen's were ; nor yet *Contradictions* to our *Natural Reasoning*, as some would have them ; (for they are not such objects as lye within its Sphere, or within the reach of its common Axioms) but are rather so many Humiliations of our Understandings, so many Gracious Affrightments, and incomprehensible indearments of our Souls unto *Love* and *Obedience* : So that if the thoughts of a *Trinity* in *Unity*, and a *Unity* in *Trinity*, amaze thy mind, thou may'st presently relieve thy self with this contemplation, That all this Unconceivable Distinction of *Subsistences* extends it self to thy Benefit and Comfort, to reach thee out of Perdition and thy Primitive Curse ! that all this Ineffable economy of the Divinity is thy Redemption, thy Sanctification, in a Word, thy *Multiply'd Salvation* ! And considering likewise, that on one side we have the express Declarations of *Holy Scripture*, the Definitions of Ge-

neral Councils, the Writings and Devotions of Primitive Fathers, the Blood and Consciences of Holy Martyrs, to testifie and seal their early *Antiquity*, their Venerable *Certainty*, and most faithful *Conveyance*; and then on the other side, that there is nothing but Scholaſtick Subtilty, and presumptuous *Enthusiasm*, to Weaken or Corrupt them; bold *Philosophy*, malicious *Cavilling*, and impious *Blasphemy*, to oppose them; I say, considering all these things, what possibly can deter any good and humble man, even in this perverse disputing Age, from triumphantly embracing the *Mysteries* of Faith with a strong and heroical Assent, with a noble captivity of Mind, and the most vigorous *Acts* of *Adoration*?

Happy had it been for the Christian World, if these *Eminencies* in Religion had been always guarded with a Flaming Cherubim, and been only made the illustrious Themes of *Praise* and *Adoration*! But now, alas! the Controversies of the Church about these higher points, will hardly suffer us to speak *Devotionally* of our *Mysteries*! Grammatical niceties, and Socinian figures, have weaken'd the Native Reverence of many Texts! Every *Dutch Systeme* is arrogantly big with the bold Explications of the Mysterious *Trinity*, and of those heights and depths before which the very Angels tremble and vail!

vail! What if some holy Persons of old, perhaps of more Piety and devout Affections, than Learning and Phylosophy, were admitted (like Moses into the Cloud) humbly to converse with God about this Dreadful Mystery, to be a Bank and a Mound against an eager and impetuous *Heresie* then raging in the Church, and to be a standing Authority against all future swellings of proud Contention; yet there is no reason but that there should be some restraint also about this *Mountain* too, to fence off the Multitude and Common Beasts, and to keep the Viler Herd at awful distance, lest they break through unto the Lord, to gaze and perish!

Exod. 19. v. 21.

2. We may be said to *Praise* the Lord with our *Reason*, when it humbly and devoutly busies it self about the *Nature* and *Attributes* of God manifested in the Works of *Creation* and *Providence*; And although they are Objects of Divine Revelation too, yet have they a sure foundation in *Right Reason*, and *Natural Religion*, and therefore may safely admit of a modest and affectionate enquiry.
Bless his holy Name.

Where, by the *Name* of God is meant all that we are able to conceive of his *Perfections*, his *Nature* and *Attributes*; and those not as they are *Metaphysically* handled, and jejunely mingled with the

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Definitions of the Schools, but as they are most pathetically set forth in Holy Scripture by his miraculous works, and gracious dispensations to Mankind.

Alas! it is not the dry Skeleton of dead and shapeless Reason, or the Scholastick joynting of prodigious Terms, (which represent an Image rather *Gastly* than *Admirable*) that can excite and animate our *Gratulations* and our *Praises*; but there must be the Life and Features, and all the *Moving Elegance* of the Frame, to give us bright conceptions of its Dignity. And therefore we find that *Holy Scripture* scarce ever meddles with an *Attribute* in its *Absolute Nature*, but only in a *Relative* and endearing way; and that *Creation* and *Providence*, (which are richly pregnant with all those *Divine Perfections* which most nearly concern us) are the two chosen and most sublime Topi's on which the *Eucharistical Psalms* are chiefly spent.

And who among us can forbear from breaking forth into acts of *Praise* and *Adoration*, when he considers how the Almighty was pleas'd out of his Infinite and Boundless *Goodness*, according to the *Freedom* of his Eternal Decree, I must not say to *Empty*, but to *Irradiate* himself into this amazing variety of Beings, this stupendous Fabrick of the World, indefinite to our most Travelling Conceptions, and only less infinite than *He* who made it?

it? Here we may behold his Wisdom in its Throne, and praise him in the Firmament of his Power! whilst we attentively recall how by his Word the Heavens were made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his Mouth! how he spread out the Sky like a Molten Glass, and ordered the ballancings of the Clouds! how he stretch'd out the North o'er the empty Place, and hung the Earth upon nothing! how he form'd the first Man out of the Dust of the Ground, breath'd into his Nostrils the immortal *Halitus*, or Breath of Life, and made that last Imperial Draught to stand the Beauty, the Dominion, and the Sabbath of all his wondrous Works! in a Word, how ravishing a Reflection must the *Creation* needs be to Men and Angels too, when *God Almighty* is Represented in the second of *Genesis*, as it were fitting down, Contemplating, and with all intellectual Complacency surveying the Accomplish'd Miracle!

And, as for Providence, what fuller matter for our Celebrations have we, than to consider, how all the unaccountable Passages here below, which seem so rugged, and like wild Contingencies to us, are notwithstanding particularly directed by the certain guidance of an *Almighty Wisdom*, and in their proper seasons produc'd by a Beautiful Order of Causes! that not only Universal Nature, but Nations, Cities, Private persons, their Policies, Justice, Thoughts and

and Contrivances, are evermore Actuated, Advanced, or Confounded, by the imperceptible streams of a Divine Prerogative ! And that all that multitude of strange Appearances, which look like so many Monstrous and Extravagant Lines to us in this position, will one day be reflected into a Regular piece, and make a glorious Figure in the Beatific Vision !

I cannot well conceive how the Epicurean could ever be thought effectually to Praise and Worship the Deity, only for the bare Excellency of his Being; whom he fancied to be like some Persian Monarch, Morosely Great, full of himself, and his one Solitude, of a Cloyster'd Majesty, or a Providence that never stoopt below the Heavens; whereas the Stoic more truly tells us, *Nulla Mæstas sine Bonitate*; and we are sufficiently satisfy'd that there was nothing so powerful to awaken Gratitude, and reconcile men to the Sacrifices of Religion, as that Transcendent goodness and particular Care which men evidently found to flow from what they Worship'd. I grant the Sun, by reason of its bright Appearance and resplendency, will naturally excite a Transient Wonder in Beholders; but yet I question whether ever it would have been Ador'd, (as it certainly was by the greatest part of the Heathen World) and have had its own Frankincense offer'd it again, if it had not been for that Annual

nual and Experienc'd Course of Benefits, which its continual Influences Hatch, produce, and perfect, for the Generations of Men.

What weighty ingredients, and commanding Subjects of *Adoration*, were the Extraordinary Managements of *Providence* in behalf of the *Jews* and their Religion! And accordingly we find the *Royal Psalmist* every where paraphrasing on those great and numerous *Miracles* of *Egypt* and the *Desart*, in an exceeding sublimity of Phrase, in all the Raptures of *Eastern Poesie*! and here might be one reason given why the *Inanimate Creation* is so distinctly call'd upon in the *Old Testament* to *Praise* the Lord; because so many of those Beings had started from their *own Law* and *Natures*, to be either an Eminent *rescue*, or a mighty *Conduit* to the Chosen people; that in the *Jewish economy* it is hard to determine, whether greater *Miracles* were perform'd by the Ministry of the *Elements*, or of the appointed *Angels*.

2. We may be said to praise the Lord with our *Imagination*, when we study to adorn our *Divine Conceptions* with the most *Excellent Idea's*, with the most *lively Representations* we can invent: for not only Reason and Judgment, but also Imagination and Fancy; not only the *Firmament*, but even the *Meteors* too, are call'd upon to *praise* the Lord.

The *Imagination* is the chief Spring and Engine of our *Affections*; it gives Sublimity, Spirit, and Vivacity to our *Conceptions*, Beauty and colour to our *Expressions*, and communicates all those agreeable *Illustrations* which serve to adorn the severity of Reason. The exactest Science we are acquainted with, cannot supply us with such cautious forms of Speech, but that they are full of Solecism, extremely defective and inadequate, when apply'd to Notions concerning *God* and *Heaven*: The most accurate *wisdom* of Words that can be invented, cannot defend it self from many *Absurdities*, when positively conversant about an *Infinite Object*, and which cannot be fully comprehended; because in such a case there is a greater Latitude of still shewing what a thing *is not*, than what *it is*. But then what we want of strict scientifical propriety in our Discourses concerning *Divine subjects*, may be nobly supply'd by rais'd and *figurative adumbrations*: And this is wholly the busines of the *Imagination*; which, when it has warily receiv'd the *Truth* and *Worth* of its *Object* from a *superior faculty*, may be allow'd to raise the Mind into a nobler Amplitude of thought, and to kindle it into vaster Conceptions; and then to beautifie and set them forth with all those proper Ornaments which usually recommend a *speculation* to our *Affections*.

Fancy, indeed, is not permitted to give a Positive and definitive sentence, or to close up its Period with an *Anathema*; but it may search for lively Representations: For such similitudes of things as may best suit with the *Analogy* of our *Natures*; also for such transcendent and superlative Terms, as are most apt to inflame the Soul, and to shadow to us the spiritual *secrecie* of Mysterious Truth. And therefore the Holy Scripture has every where exhibited to us its heavenly *Wisdom* in *Parables*, and *sensible Types*; and proportion'd its *Revelations* mores to the *Imaginations* of Men, than to their more *subtile* modes of Reasoning. Therefore also God appeared to *Moses* in a *Cloud*, and his *Glory* shone through a *Veil*; that since the *Prophet* was not able to sustain his more open Appearance, he might with safety understand his *Infinity* by the concealment of an indefinite and mysterious Declaration; and more ardently desire a further Manifestation of those Excellencies, which were but imperfectly revealed to him in remote and distant Scenes: for no man seem'd more acquainted with God than *Moses*, and no man seem'd more importunate to know him better: *I beseech thee shew me thy Glory*, Exod. 33. 18.

Similitudes and *Metaphors* in Religion, are those *Clouds of Incense* wherewith at the same time we both enter and obscure the *Sanctum Sanctorum*: We

receive those sensible Representations, and gracious Condescensions which God hath been pleas'd to make us of his own *Nature* and the *other World*, in the same manner as the Disciples did the Discourses of our Saviour going to *Emmaus*: we have not a full *comprehension* of what is thus *Figur'd* to us; but yet we are religiously affected, we have a *spiritual Sensation* of its unutterable import, and our hearts *burn* within us.

The Strength and Vehemency of the *Imagination* will sometimes carry forth the *Reason* and *Judgment* to make new *Discoveries*; 'twill excite them to take such Circuits and Travels in the contemplation of *Eternal Beings*, till the Soul is ready to *swim* and grow giddy, and the *speculation* turns almost *Apoplexy*; it will sometimes actuate the mind to a stretch and emanation beyond its *present Order*, to a taste and immature anticipation of *unproportion'd Knowledge*: And this does not proceed from the heat and elevation of contemplative and *splenetick Heads*, but it is the sober attestation and examin'd experience of more fix'd and solid Brains.

It is reported of a *Metaphysical Divine* of our own *Church*, that by a long assiduity of thinking and a constant ardour of Meditation, he could sometimes refine and sublimate a *Theorem* to that degree, till it became too nice even for his own ex-

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amination, when he had abated of that Temper in which he first fram'd it ; that when the intellectual fire was out, and his Brain was sunk into its ordinary dimensions, he could not justifie that speculation to his cooler review, which he was certain had an exact conformity to his more rais'd Capacity.

However, we need not fear any *Illusion*, any *Phanaticism* from the *innocent Excesses* of the *Fancy*, whilst they are only made the *private Nourishment* of an *Holy Life* ; whilst they only promote our *Adorations*, not determine our *Opinions* ; whilst they only enter our *Closet-Devotions*, not our *Publick Services*, or *Creeds*. It being also easie to distinguish by the *concomitance* or *absence* of *Humility* and *Love*, when our minds are gently fill'd with *Divine Images*, or when they are Enthusiastically possess'd with *presumptuous Enquiries*. And thus the *Imagination*, the meanest and most trivial faculty of the *Humane Soul*, under a good management may be an admirable Instrument and incentive of *Divine Praise* and *Adoration* ; even as God Almighty thought fit to chuse the *Rainbow*, that Circle of phantastic colours, for the *Symbole* and *Sacrament* of his Beloved Attribute, his *Mercy*.

3ly. We may be said to *Praise* the Lord with our *Affections*, when our *Adoration* is perform'd with strong

strong vehemency of Soul, and intenseness of Spirit, with the Unions of *Love* and *Wonder*, and such-like Bright Affections, as perfect and exalt our most spiritual Duties.

The *Will* is also comprehended in the *Affections*: For as the Common *Passions* in their worst acceptation are the Deformities and Turbulencies of the *Animal Nature*; so the *Affections* are only the fresher gales of *Virtue*; the more enliven'd Acts of the Rational and Superior *Will*: and as the former raise commotions and irregularities in the *Blood* and *Humours* of the *Body*; so these latter invigorate the *Faculties* of the *Soul*, making them *Heroical* and *Divine* in their Emanations.

Now as the capacity of the *Intellect* is much larger than that of the *Senses*, so the amplitude of the *Will* and *Affections* far surpasses that of the *Understanding*; and therefore God has requir'd that our *Desire* and *Love* of him should be more perfect and complete than our *Knowledge* of him: for we are bound to entertain his *Perfections* with the closest adhesion of *Heart* and *Soul*, though we can apprehend them onely with a *Partial* and enigmatical *Knowledge*.

Let men therefore boast of their Mighty *Reasonings*, their close *Deductions*, their strong link'd *Consequences*, and their elaborate *Demonstrations* in

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Religion; when they have done all to justifie themselves in a cautious advance towards Heaven, they will find that the Best Divinity consists in *Love* and *Wonder*; and that there are such enlargements of the Soul arising from these *Affections*, as none can signifie, none can conceive, but those who have lain under the *Blessed Experience*.

III. I will endeavour to point out some of those Benefits which will arise from a worthy performance of the Duty.

Now this *Holy Exercise* being worthily perform'd, will exalt our *Faith* beyond the reach of *Sophistry* or *Prophaneness*; 'twill establish in us a permanent love to Goodness, and a temper of antipathy to the contradictions and contumelies of Vice; 'twill convey our fervent Meditations to such safe and peaceful Heights, till the false Beauties of the World make no Impression on us, and its keenest Temptations are out-distanc't: It will secure all the stages of an holy Life, and reduce that Barbarous, Warlike, Stubborn, and Malicious *Religion*, which is now in Vogue, to the truly Ancient Primitive *Christianity*; to a cheerful and serene Principle of Meekness, Humility, constant Obedience, and Universal Love.

When the Soul is made tender with this *Heavenly Converse*, made apt to kindle at every representation

tion of Divine Goodness, to meet and embrace with every attribute; how vile and loathsome must the deformity of Sin needs appear? The very Transports of Adoration, whilst they continue upon us, are a natural preservative against the Encroachments of Vice; and when the Holy Agitation is ceas'd, it commonly settles into a lively calm of lasting Gratitude and Love.

But to speak more particularly, Praise and Adoration are actions perfective of those very Faculties which perform them.

For, they give a Divine Brightness to our Reason, free it from the illusions of Sence and Passion, fix it on useful enquiries, and in all its Discoveries make it serviceable to the Sanctuary: for not onely Religious, but even Natural objects may be contemplated and examin'd by the humble Adorer into Mysterious subjects of Devotion and Wonder.

The True Christian Philosopher, even from his common observations in secular Learning, will by a due Analysis of Meditation open to himself a delicious prospect of Heavenly Glories; pursue every Motion and Effect to its first Cause and Author, till he finds his Scale of Contemplation to look like Jacobs Ladder, with Angels ascending and descending: whilst the proud Enquiring Naturalist, who sacrifices more to his Hypothesis than his God, will reap

nothing but Presumption and Contempt of Heaven from his Conversation even with the *Divinest Objects*. He will call a True *Miracle* the *Luxuriancy of Nature*, an Extraordinary Act of Providence onely the sudden eruption of a *Natural*, though hidden Cause; or at least he will debase these immediate *Operations* of the Almighty to some cheap piece of Motion and Mechanism, that may serve to ease and pacifie his Wonder; thus loosing the improvement of his *Faith* and *Humility*, by the Arrogancy of his *Wit* and *Invention*!

This exalted Exercise of Praising and Blessing the Lord, will also fill the *Imagination* with Heavenly *Imagery*. 'Twill adorn it with the Vine and Pomgranate of the *Temple*, making that *Faculty* an holy Receptacle of pious *Emblems*, which in its Corrupt Nature is the chief Seat and Empire of *Original Sin*; the Infernal Theatre, where all the busiest Scenes of *Temptation* are display'd. 'Twill teach us not to lay out our best superlative words on Earthly things; not to embalm Rottenness and Corruption with the Epithites of Divinity; not to Deifie the Ambitious with sacred Oratory, or to commit Idolatry with a too Bounteous Invention; but to reserve a peculiar *Hierarchy of Language* for our Superior Intercourse.

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Lastly, It will spiritualize our *Affections*, call them off from the defilements of the World, make them languish in unaccountable Unions, and give them a tender Sympathy with all the Endearments of the *Canticles*: It will create in us such an *Habitual Indulgence* towards the *sweetnesses* of a Religious life, that amidst the *Avocations* of the world, the disturbances of secular business, and the *Afflictions* of *Common Conversation*, we shall be able to maintain a *secret Under-current* of pious Aspirations and Affections.

Let us therefore summon up all that is *within us*, all the *Faculties* and *Powers* of our Souls to *Blesß* and *Praise* the Lord with fervent *Gratulations*! For surely, Christianity is not only a *bare Avoydance* of Evil, a plausible course in *Moral Actions*, or an External living up to the *Decency* of a *Station*, (which yet in a Degenerate Age are no mean Patterns and Examples) but certainly there are requir'd some *Affectionate Heats*, Some *Breathings* and *Pantings* after further degrees of *Holinesß*, and an *Indefinite Perfection*. And though the cold *Logicians* are apt to call this a *Spiritual Romance*, and the effect of a *Religious Spleen*; yet we know of what *Complexion* they were, who styl'd the *miraculous effusions* of the *Holy Ghost*, *Drunkennesß*, and the fumes of *New Wine*; St. Pauls *Learning*, and the *Sobriety* of his Reason, *Madnesß* and *Distraction*. Sure-

Surely, no man can be an *Heretick* in his *secret Communions* with *God*, or a dangerous *Enthusiast* in his *Inward Adorations*: And if some *Weaknesses* have been found among the *private Ardours* of the *Retir'd*; alas! what are they, but the glorious *Frailties* of the *Pathetic Soul*, the Noble *Extravagancies* of a *Seraphick Temper*, and an impetuous *Devotion*!

I know there is a *lower Draught* of Christianity; but I speak a *practical Mystery* to the *Wise*, to the *Perfect*, to the *Prophets*, and *Sons of the Prophets*; who know how to be warm and affectionate in Religion, without being *Superstitions*; how to *Adore*, without being *Idolatrous*.

I speak to you, who are plac'd in all the Circumstances of an *Extatrick life*; who are so nearly acquainted with the *intelligible World*, that what is but plain *Picture* to the *Vulgar*, is *Hieroglyphick* to you; they must be contented with the bare *External View*, whilst you enrich your minds with the more Excellent *Moral and Mystery*; To you, who are able to compose and consecrate the Recollection of your *Daily Studies* into an *Evening Hymn*; whose constant Employment consists in such an *Eminency of Spiritual Duties*, as others faintly attempt in seldom Festivals with secular Mixtures and divided Powers. To you, lastly, who are perpetually attending on the Altar; who love to speak

speak of the Glory of Gods Kingdom, and to talk of his Power ; who are continually standing before the Throne, having your lives hid with Christ in God, in Internal Joy, and the secrencies of an Incomprehensible peace ; who live under such an Extraordinary sense of the Divine *Wisdom* and *Goodneß*, that you find it difficult to refrain from publishing his Perfections continually, and from letting the Mistaken world know, that it is our *Priviledge*, our *Duty*, and our *Excellency*, never to cease from uttering in *some measure* our *Gratulations* and *Praises* here on Earth, till they Expire into *Greater* ; till we arrive to those *Perfect Harmonies* above, where our *Glorify'd Souls* and *Bodies* shall for ever dwell in an *Eternal Triumph* of *Adoration* and *Amazement* ! where, like the voice of Trumpets, of Thunders, and like the noise of many Waters, vve shall for ever sing *Hallelujah* ; Salvation, and Glory, and Honour, and Power be to the *Blessed Trinity* : And again we shall sing *Hallelujah* !

F I N I S.

